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April 1889

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April 1889

MERLIN

AND OTHER POEMS

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AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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FIRST WORDS.

What hills and streams have taught to me,
How Heaven's face hath touched my heart,
In summer shine, 'neath winter skies,
To those who care, this I impart.

Some strains from Border days of old;
Weird visions e'en of earlier time!
High daring, glamour, hapless fate,—
These mingle in the changing rhyme.

Esteem or slight the simple song,
To me is nought, I thee assure;
Enough those thrillings of my heart—
Those Nature-breathings, sacred, pure:

On heights withdrawn, where burn-heads croon
To loneliness a music meet,
Where tormentil, and heather-bell,
And blaeberry crown the wild retreat:

While gleams glide o'er the silent hills,
And touch them with a golden grace;
And up their climbing trodden ways
In single-file the white sheep pass.

Thus I have known the summer peace—
No purer treasure soul can find;
Yet oft with Thee my heart has sped,
Thou Spirit of the mountain wind,

When clouds were driven, mists were cleft,
And the bent tossed in stormy mood;
Mine ear alone to list thy voice
Upon the moorland solitude.

Thus would I touch each living soul
To know and feel as I have known,
On sun-smit height, in lonely glen,
The vision from the Eternal Throne!

MERLIN.

The Merlin of this poem is Merlin Caledonius, known also as Merlin Wylt and Silvestris. He ought not to be identified with Myrdin Emrys, or Merlin Ambrosius, who was the *vates* of Vortigern, and also apparently of Aurelius Ambrosianus,—the man of Roman descent who superseded Vortigern in the Cymric supremacy, and lost it again about 465. This Myrdin Emrys was probably also the Merlin of Uther Pendragon and of Arthur. While the name of the latter is associated with Dinas Emrys, or Fort of Emrys, in the Vale of the Waters—Nant Gwynant, which circles round

the rugged grandeur of the southern slopes of Snowdon—that of the former, Merlin Caledonius, is inseparably joined to the wavy, far-spreading, and heather-streaked hills between which the Powsail Burn makes its way to the Tweed in the haugh of Drummelzier. Out of the two Merlins — the earlier and the later—the romancers of the eleventh and following centuries formed a third or legendary Merlin. Now the personage appears as a vulgar wizard and soothsayer, master of the art of glamoury, to be finally overcome by a woman's wiles, and kept for ever in hopeless captivity.

The Caledonian Merlin is a sufficiently distinct historical personage. He was the son of Morvryn, who was descended from Coel Godebawc, the head of one of the main royal lines of the Cymri. He had a twin-sister Gwendydd. He was the friend of the Prince Gwenddoleu, a lord or king of the North, and he was present at the decisive battle of Ardderyd in 573, when the contest lay between the Pagan and Christian forces of the time. Merlin

was on the Pagan or losing side. After the defeat and the death of his leader Gwenddoleu, he fled to the wilds of Drummelzier, in the wood of Caledon. There he spent some years, reputed insane, probably only heart-broken, and despairing of the Cymric cause and his own fortunes, — perhaps doubting the trustworthiness of his original faith or Nature-worship. Finally, he is said to have died at the hands—rather stones and clubs—of the herdsmen of a princeling of the district, then incorporated in the kingdom afterwards known as Strathclyde, and ruled over by Rydderch Hael, originally lord of Llanerch, or Lanark. Merlin's grave is pointed out by tradition near the village of Drummelzier, by the side of the Powsail Burn as it joins the Tweed. There can be little doubt, looking to external and internal evidence, that this Merlin was the author of certain poems now preserved in the 'Four Ancient Books of Wales,' and that to him also are to be assigned portions of the Merlinian poems, in which there occur interpolations of a later date.

The poems show a peculiarly delicate feeling for nature and natural objects—tree, hill, and fountain —and they are pervaded by a cry of wailing and despair for the fortunes of the Cymric race. Many of the lines show the deepest pathos; some of them are incorporated in the following poem.

Merlin's relation to the Christianity of the time is indicated in the poem. Originally a Nature-worshipper—probably with priestly functions—one who reverenced the powers and objects of Nature, and the sun above all, as the lord and symbol of creative and sustaining power, he was more or less affected by the Christianity of the time, but he never fully embraced it. If it ever had a hold on him, he appears to have relapsed from it in his later years; although conceptions from the faith which was making progress around him mingled with his original beliefs and pretensions to supernatural power and prophetic insight. This is the Merlin as depicted in the poem. It opens immediately after the battle of Ardderyd, when, in doubt and

despair, the hopes of his life broken, he had fled to the retreat and shelter afforded by the hills and glens of Upper Tweeddale, where, more than a thousand years afterwards, men whose faith was of quite another type found refuge. Here, in the centre of the wood of Caledon, frequenting a fountain on the hills, he is said to have lived for some years ere he met his violent fate. Merlin was to a certain extent contemporary with Kentigern, who is said to have met him on the wilds which he haunted, and sought to convert him to the Christianity of the time, with, however, but partial and temporary effect. The details of the interview, as given hundreds of years afterwards in the 'Scotichronicon,' are of course a priestly invention, and wholly untrustworthy. The character of the Merlin of the poem is, I venture to think, in accordance with all the earliest and genuine information we have regarding him. His sister Gwendydd, The Dawn,—her affection and companionship in his life and troubles —and his early love, Hwimleian, The Gleam,—have

their warrant in the original poems, and in the later ones, still of a very early time, in which reference is made to the Bard and Seer of this semi-historic, semi-mythic epoch of the ancient Cymri.

24*th October* 1888.

MERLIN.

PERSONS.

MERLIN—Bard, Seer, Wizard.
GWENDYDD (The Dawn)—His twin-sister.
HWIMLEIAN (The Gleam)—His early love.

MERLIN (*in the Glen, and on Drummelzier Law*).

ALL night I've wandered in the glen, 'mid hum
Of hidden waters moving in the gloom,
And eerie sounds, strange voices from th' unseen,
And things have shaped themselves upon the air,
Some mocking me, and some soliciting
My evil will;—dim, weird sprites, that pass
'Twixt sky and earth in dark hours ere the morn,—

Form after form in crowding mystery,
Where none can mark the mien of living thing,
Or pause upon a face for love or light;
But all that seems to be doth also pass
In mockery of show to mortal eye.

The hill-top now is gained, and lo! afar
The eastern summits redden with the dawn;
The moor around me wakes to growing sound
And stir of life, all tremulous before
The high on-coming of the lord of day.

This morn I bow before thee, lord of light
And life!—my hope, my fear, my reverence!
Of thee unworthy, and my early vows.
Far-gleaming arrows, piercing feeble mists,
Herald thine uprise; low down in the vales,
That pour their loving tribute to the Tweed,
The waters shimmer 'mid the morning's joy;
Around me burn-heads croon, and moorland birds
Awake, a-wing, pipe brief glad notes to thee,

The brightening lord of happy melody.
Now part in twain the curtains of the dawn,
Each hill-top is aflame, and thou hast set
Thyself, full-orbed, in empire o'er the day :—
Aglow as in that dawn when first enthroned,
The wasting ages taking nought from thee,
Nor tainted by the evil of this earth,
Thou layest now, as new birth of the morn,
Thy strength of glory on the circling hills.
I worship thee, O sovereign of the sky,
The symbol of the God who is unseen.

Inspirer, thou, of life and hope and joy,
My pulses beat with thine. Again I feel
The blood that leaps to high ambition's quest,
And wakes, as sudden flash, my vanished dream,
To hold in leash the powers of all this world,
Be lord of nature and of human lives,—
Phantasm of youth that beckoned and beguiled
To empire and emprise, wild, subtle, vain—
As if this feeble hand could pluck from thee,

O king of day, thy lofty radiance,
And usurp thy throne.

To know the soul of things has been my quest,
To feel the beating of the inmost heart
That pulses through the world,—to know and be
As God,—a king o'er kings, with subtler power
Than that of lords who rule by force of arm,
Or wavering tie of human sympathy,—
This, this, the dream that dazzled all my youth;
And I have dared and done, in this my quest,
What no man knows, seen what no eye hath seen—
Weird sights not utterable in mortal words,
Strange forms o' morn, shapes in the weather-gleam,
That silent move and pass along the rim,
Clear-set, of the dim world that engirds the hills.
Ay, at grey dawn, I've struggled with the bird
Of wrath, until the sun came to mine aid,
And smote the hovering shadow, beak and wing.—
And now the dream is riven, shatterëd,
As when the great west wind in strength has struck

The summer heaven; and lo! we see but shreds
Of all its gilded towers, and broken shapes
Athwart the storm-cleft sky.

To stand supreme in mystery of might;
To lead the battle on to victory;
Mine was the pledge, assurance, and the hope,
The inspiration, and the faith of men.
Their trusting look to me as on the morn
They passed, fiend-blessed, to that green plain
that lay
Between the Liddel's tide and Carwinelow;
This lives for aye deep scarred upon my heart.
I see the shock, and hear the frusch of spears,
Edge grinding edge, all through the fatal hours;
Twice seven armies locked in deadly grip,
Until at length that Cross, upraised against
The evening sky, shot o'er the struggling hosts
One blinding ray, as of the wrath of heaven;
And in that hour supreme of fate my power
Was stricken, and each sprite grew palsied-pale,

And passed away before my 'wildered eye,
Dissolved as phantom of the feeble air;
And then—was nought but faces of the dead,
Upturned, upbraiding, in the gloamin' grey;
And all was laid 'neath cover of the shade,
And all was hushed save the unheeding stream.

My prince, my Gwenddoleu, whose golden torques
I wore, and thou, well-lovëd Gwendydd's son,
Thou fearless bearer of the white-rimmed shield,
Where may I seek you now? Where are my dead,
The dead of Ardderyd? To me ye come
No more; no more again your hands I touch,—
To me your eyes glance never light of life!
"Hath not the burden been consigned to earth?
And every one must give up what he loves."
The budding thorn is green, the birch is blest,
And sweet the melody and chirp of birds;
But ye are still, my Moryen and Mordav!
Are ye now spirits of the nerveless clouds
That speck the shadowed hills and sweep the moor;

That dwell in air, and come, and passing wail,
Behold the misery of race and kin,
But have no power to stretch a hand in aid
Of their fell lot? Oft I hear a voice
A-crying in the night, see glimpsing forms
In outbreak of the moon through riven sky.
Oh! unavailing wail and stricken arm!
Is this your heaven?

Or are these seemings of the strainëd sense—
The fond heart's quickening of the hopeless dead?
And is it so that all are surely gone,
As is the creed of that far Orient,
Whence my race has sprung—to Nirvana's shade,
The formless state where nought is marked or known,
No sense, no thought, pain, pleasure, or desire;
Where keen emotion hath no quickening,
And resolute will, unstrung, can dare no deed
Of good or ill, and hath no fate to bear:
Where comes not e'en a passing dream to stir

The unconscious brain, or glint of memory
Across the darkened past; but all is one—
An absolute repose, alike for those
Once harassed by the pains of earthly life,
And souls that lived spell-bound in human bliss,
Heroes in battle slain, the weak who passed
From cottage couch, the proud from palace-hall,
The maiden in her bloom, the mother, child;
In the absorbing All are life and death alike,—
Close folded in unconscious unity?

What, then, this life of ours but pain and wreck!—
Mirage that hovers fair o'er youthful sky;
Inwoven dream that parts as mist before
The sun of noon; mid-life a battle 'gainst
Fierce striving powers for issues no one knows
Are in their final outcome good or ill,—
None seeing whither tends the deed we do
In the mysterious process of the world!

GWENDYDD (*The Dawn—his twin-sister—sings; she addresses him as Lallogen, twin-brother*).

Lallogen! princely Morvryn's son,
Of olden heroes born,
Spirit divine, incarnate god,
To thee I bow this morn!

Thou, lord of airy powers, that dwell
In speed of the towering cloud,
In far out-flash of the levin fell,
In the croak of the raven brood;

In the hurrying mist of the moor,
Thy vassal spirits troop,
In the striving blast that tears the pine,
In eagle forms that swoop

From their course in the rack of the sky—
Playmates of the stormy gleam—
Winging to earth the stroke of fate,
As well to thee may beseem !

At thy bidding the wrath of the storm
Suddenly smites earth's rest,
And swiftly the burns arise and roar
In awe of thy dread behest.

The gentle milkwort bows its head,
Cowering beneath the hour,
When thy spirit feels not a bound
To its lust of evil power.

All unlovely, O brother, is might,
When slave of the wayward will ;
And passion that knows but to smite
Is self-accursed with its ill.

Once blameless wert thou in thy strength,
As on that eve of old,
When Saxons fierce from the Frisian Sea
Crept in the mist's grey fold,

And sudden swooped on the Meldon green,
From old Penjacob glen,—
Thou and I in the lonely Caer,—
No hope or help from men!

At calm upraising of thy hand,
And far gleam of thine eye,
The rainbow rose round that airy Caer
In sacred majesty.

And we two forms within its rim
Shone god-like on the gaze,
And every sieging eye was held
In wild and weird amaze!

So arched in splendour Meldon's top,
Our blinded foes dismayed,
Paled, fled before the Power of Heaven
In its awesome robe arrayed.

Now turn thee from the tempter's thrall,
Dream of one bygone day,—
The flickering shade o'er the woodland glade
When thou and I were at play,—

And thou touched thy harp to a gentle tune
Of happy melody;
The deer stood charmed; the golden leaves
Dropped from the quivering tree.

Oh, brother! take that harp once more,
All-thrilling to the gleams
That pass now o'er the mountain's brow,
'Mid the music of the streams:

As from the heaven's height they come,
Bright messengers to earth :
Ethereal love doth shine in them,
They speak a god-like birth.

And high they bear our human heart
O'er grief, and fear, and pain :
Ah, brother ! shall thy harp resound
No more in holy strain !

MERLIN.

My heart is dust,
And callous is the soul that once was thrilled
By every pure and gentle thing of earth ;
No more for me is blessing or to bless,—
Mine,—the power that smites, but cannot save ;
Mine,—dreaded memory that wakes to hate ;
Mine,—vision more than man's that can foresee
The future of my race, and what befalls
Of fateful contest and of storied deed.

Ghosts of the mountain mutter in mine ear ;
Sea-birds, sky-borne, aye clang it on my brain,—
The Bard dishonoured, worthless Priest extolled,
The kingless Cymri trampled on the plain,
Blood-spilling from the sea to shoreless land,
Their Caers all desolate on the windy hills,
Haunted by wailing spirits of the dead,—
This powerless I behold in my despair.
Once I could bend each sprite to subtle art,
And I could sport with all their fiendish power,
And sway it to mine end, but now,—so ripe
In me the habit of the evil will,—
Each mocks my fainting purpose after good,
And I, proud master once, am now the slave !

GWENDYDD (*takes Merlin's harp and sings*).

Fresh as of old the breeze of the morn,
Plaintive the notes that float
O'er the moor with the sunny thyme,
And the blue forget-me-not.

The rock-rose lifts its face to the sun,
It droops when its lord is set;
The tormentil peers, the heather-bell glows;
Sweet-eyed is the violet.

The lowly gale looks forth from the grass,
Silver-starring the brae;
Th' Idæan vine holds its cup for the dew,
High where the burn-heads play,

As they flash in ripples of light,
Ere down they break to the glen
By green bank, red scaur, and grey rock,
Where the rowan shades the linn:

And the sun o'er all is moving in joy,
The strong lord of the sky;
He stoops to bless the earth with his love,
Benign in his majesty.

And nought but raises its face to him,
Both herb and flower of earth;
He, lord of all, that rules in heaven,
Hath care for the lowliest birth.

And thou art far from the face of God—
Whate'er thy craft or power—
Who knowest not first to bless with thy might,
As the sun in the morning hour.

MERLIN.

Ah! gentle sister, thou hast touched my heart;
I live, again, in the green fields of memory,
A swift-winged hour of bright enchanting hope.
Would I were clothed again in innocence
Of youth, when every breeze was life and love,
Each ripple of the stream a soothing sound,
Each sparkle leapt to joy before mine eye;
Each mountain flower the darling of my heart;
When, with my shield on shoulder, sword on thigh,

I roamed by day the wood of Caledon,
And in the silence of the summer night
Lay folded in a dreamless sleep,—the hours
Unvisited by ghostly forms of air.
E'en now the vision rises,—that fair form,
The sportive maid, the Gleam amid the trees,
Whereon the spring had spread the apple-bloom,
Low by the river's side,—my Hwimleian,
Earth's paragon of movement and of grace,
The jewel of this heart, a faithless guardian!
Stale heart of mine! now no dew of heaven
Can freshen thee, no dawn bring quickening.
Ah me! the blossoms were untimely frayed,
Ne'er golden autumn theirs; and yet 'twas well,
Hwimleian, thou didst not wed with devil's son!

HWIMLEIAN (*The Gleam—Merlin's early love—appearing as a glint on the hill, sings*).

The daughter of the Sun, I come,
His joy, his free first-born;

As birthright fair the gleam I wear
Of the golden hair of morn.

Above the earth's dark orb I soar,
Nought there eludes my ken;
The wide o'erarching heaven is mine—
The Queen of hill and glen.

I smite the darkness from the cloud,
And pierce its dusky fold;
I lay my hand on the dark-browed storm,
And charm it into gold.

The grey moor mists transfigured pass,
And every evil sprite
And power of air, that threatened earth,
Flees stricken in my sight.

Over the mottled hills I fly,
My brother shade with me;

With light wing drape the peace that broods
O'er the moorland spaces free.

O' night my paler robe is cast
O'er the trembling waters clear;
I peer into depths of the silent glen,
The lonely herdsman's cheer.

The brow of pain I touch with joy;
My face—my power unfurled,
Dark spirits cowering pass away—
Mine homage of the world!

MERLIN.

Ah me! this voice once more—this voice to me—
The faithless to the truest love on earth!
She has conquered death, and calls from th' unseen
To me, dim groper after truth and power,
Yet missing bliss! man mocked and satisfied
With outward show and sensual pageantry.

The outer seeming, not the truth itself,
Has been my portion; husk, not fruit, was mine,—
The trick of art which awes, destroys, but builds
Not for the world: when it hath passed, remain
The waste of ashes, cowering dread, despair,
The glare of power that briefly flames in space,
Its whole reward—the dazzling snare whereby
The spirit of the world leads captive souls
Whose trust is in their strength, divorced from love,
And silent working, patient thought and faith,
That move the springs of progress and of hope—
Not waited on by fame or noisy talk
Of buzzing tongues, or clamour of the crowd—
Yet in the course of ages moulding men
To noble likeness, life of higher grade.
The stream of order from th' Eternal Fount
Flows free and full, unmeasured in its might,
Unthwarted, suffering not disharmony,
But thrusting all our rebel strokes aside,
And mocking all our puny might to grasp,

And turn aside from its unerring aim.
One Will there is in heaven and on earth—
'Tis mirrored in the open-visioned soul.
Who waits the revelation only knows,
Who bows before the Power hath true control.

GWENDYDD.

The dew is on the grave that holds my son;
The grass upon the mound is green where lies
Our Gwenddoleu. They have no ear to list
The twittering birds at opening of the dawn.
But, O Lallogen, lord of lucid verse,
Thou wise diviner, fearless in the fight,
"The fosterer of song among the streams,"
Thy locks are hoar as when the winter lays
Its snowy fingers on Trahenna's brow;
And thou art nearing mortal's dreaded doom,
And saddest to my sight will be the cairn
Of thine entrenchment,—there my heart will yearn

For thee in separation long and cold.
I pray thee, loved one, pass not from the world
In mood of wrath, vengeful, unreconciled;
The Priest shall bear to thee the sacred rite
That heals and saves.

MERLIN.

Sister! no rite shall be for me at hand
Of cloak-draped monk, the ally of our foes.
He gives, forgives, as he were Lord—purblind:
"May my communion be with God alone!"

(*After an interval.*)

Gwendydd! to my fountain lead me once again,
Then leave me,—I would see once more alone
The well-eye 'mong the hills that has for fringe
The solitary fern of tender mien,
That bends, leaf-charmëd, o'er the gleam it loves,
Where birk and hazel fleck with shifting shades
The waters, as they move in gentle rise

And fall, and pour soft music ceaselessly ;
Where mosses, green and brown, cling to the stones,
And eyes of fair forget-me-not are bright
With blessings for the spray that leaps to kiss
It by the way. There may I commune free
With creatures of the wild that come at eve,
Whose language is the depth of loving eyes,
Who err not from the order of the world.

O Spirit of my fountain—pure, benign,
Whose dwelling is in depths of Nether Erd,
Far down, beyond the turmoil of the world,
Serene and sanctified, untouched by storm,
Or aught that can defile,—who wearest aye
Unstainëd face in trouble or in calm
Of earth or air,—I pray this evil heart
In me may pass. Now would I be at peace
With thee, O Spirit, and all gentle things.
I know mine hour is come.

RUSTICS (*herdsmen find him at the fountain*).

Lo! Wizard Merlin, lo! the devil's son!
Destroyer of our crops, bringer fell of storms,
Nor sparing herdsman in the moorland drift,
Nor tender lamb in bitter wind of March,—
Grip, bind him with the green withes from the tree
Blessed by the priest. Then swiftly to the stream.

[*They carry him to the Tweed.*

Son of air and earth! let water hide thee,
Gurgling o'er, when thou, sunk deep, art dead
In wheeling Debbit,—devil's pool, where dwells
The iron-toed, the fiend who waits thee there:
On earth or in the air not thine to die.

Strong Spirit of the flood! we give to thee
The lord of all the elements of air,—
Who from the hills sent torrent through the haugh,
That strove and roared, and bore its tawny mane,
Outsweeping, merciless, in joy of wrath,—

To be for ever thine, ne'er more to touch
Our earth with wizard spell.

MERLIN (*raising his head once from the current ere he sinks*).

One gleam upon the stream! My Hwimleian!
My love! fair daughter of the sun,—thou, thou
Alone art faithful unto passing death
Of this poor feeble framework of the soul
That fears the dread unknown and yearns for love,
E'en in that future baffling all our ken.
I am for ever consecrate to thee!
What boots it aye to be, if not to be
With love!—the loved and lost, the soul that waits
In ever-living love! With thee I grasp
Anew the golden thread of life,—to be
No more 'mong living men where life is not.

HWIMLEIAN (*in the air over the stream*).

Now hold I thee, the spirit, free from taint
Of mortal flesh, and from the tempter's thrall.
Now we are one—one in our strength and love—
Ne'er one before in all that checkered world
Which men call earth, where passions rage and rule,
And love but seems, and gilded guilt has sway;
And the brute hand that understandeth not
Can strike the brave, the noble, and the wise—
God-sped, whose kingdom is where earth is not:
There to the best doth e'er befall the worst.
Base earth no longer dominates the soul!
We know it now, one orb among the stars,
A speck upon infinity; and far
Beneath our wingëd flight, through ether borne,
In pure and simple vision we shall see
Free beauty undefaced, the truth undimmed,
And purity unsullied—face to face

In that unbroken light which faintly here
Gleams through the veil, and seeks with pitying
heart
To win the unheeding darkness of the world!

And seeing, we shall be what we behold,
Through the unwavering purpose of the soul,
Transfixed by glory of th' Eternal Throne,
Boundless as craving of the heart for bliss.
Here effort wanders not in devious ways,
And strength wails not its wasted energy,
Nor love is pain, but will and heart are one
In high endeavour after nobler good,
As life on life evolves, infinite life,
Th' unwearied process of th' eternal years.

I.

A BAPTISM AT ST GORDIAN'S CROSS.

This Cross was erected by the late Sir John Naesmyth of Posso and Dawyck, near the site of the ancient church in the valley of Manor, either founded by or dedicated to St Gordian. Sir John was one of the few who knew and felt the power of the story of Tweedside. Gordian seems to have been a man of Roman descent who embraced Christianity, and whose name became connected at a very early period with the upper part of the vale of Manor. There is a cleugh on the Kirkstead side which is known as Gordon's, but which is unquestionably Gordian's cleugh. A St Gordian was beheaded at Rome under Julian the Apostate about the year 362. A St Gorgon was martyred under Diocletian. The kirk or chapel in Manor is variously named Gordian's and Gorgon's. St Gordian's feast was kept on the 10th of May.

A little gathering of simple folks:
From Kirkhope, Langha', and far Manorhead,
Come plaided shepherds, wives in neat attire,
And their wee lassies, eager, sunny-haired,
Bring posies of fern-leaves and heather-bells,
Rare blooms that nestle late in nooks of glens,
There cherished by the Spirit of the wild,
To be a sweet surprise for shepherds' bairns,
Or autumn wanderer who haunts the moors!

True worth and reverence are in their mien,
Their manners simple, open as the day;
The heaven's free face has daily greeted them,
And in them dwell, although they wot it not,
The fear, the faith, the worship of the hills!
On the green brae they group them round the cross
That marks the spot where stood an ancient church,
Far in the wild, forgotten long ago;
Yet 'twas a fane to which the hearts of men
Had yearned of old as to a lovëd place
Of sepulture,—their prayer that they might lie

At last beneath the eastern oriël,
Where beam of morn would glint upon their grave,—
A link with heaven, and pledge of hoped-for day.

October's tide had touched the purple heath
With russet brown, made bracken golden-hued,
And on the spreading hills there rose and fell
In quiet wavy flow, the lint-white bent,—
A sunny splendour passing from the earth.
Then in his arms the shepherd-father raised
His infant for the holy rite of Christ—
The sweet young life now in its dawn amid
This pathos and this glory of decay!
Oh! we know not, sweet child, that e'er for thee
The bracken will be green, the heather bloom,
Or any spring bring verdure to the hills:
This fading scene may be the world to thee!
But thou art consecrate to Him who was,
And is, and is to come—the abiding Life—
Who on a hillside long ago clothed death
With glory more than splendour of decay,

Or lingering streak of summer suns now gone;
Shed o'er its sombre face the gleam of life,—
The life that holds thee now with Him in God!

The simple rite administered, our heads
Were bowed in prayer, and at the pastor's words
There rose the memories of those who lived
In other times, now laid beneath our feet,
In whom had been the faith, the hope that binds
All fervent men in holy brotherhood,
Through all the years past, present, and to come.
Our souls were moved,—no word was uttered;
Only the burn, that paused not in its flow,
But came that hour with deep voice from the hills,
In harmony of solemn resonance,
Spoke to the vale the feeling in our hearts.

October 1875.

II.

In Memoriam.

JOCKIE:

COMPANION AND FRIEND, WHO DIED OF OLD AGE, DEC. 18, 1876, IN HIS EIGHTEENTH YEAR.

Cold, stiff, and dead, thou liest to-day,
My friend on many a pathless way,
Up glen, o'er hill, and moorland lone:
No fear hadst thou, aye bounding on,
For I was there!

On many a misty top we've been,
For long where nought was heard or seen,
Thou by my side,—thy lint-white hair,
To me a gladsome vision there,
Lighting the gloom!

By weird grey cairn on windy height,
Where, far away from human sight,
We sat an hour in storm or shine,
Thy wondering eyes would peer in mine,
In wistful gaze.

If but a crust I gave to thee,
How grateful was thy look to me!
Thou ne'er didst want, yet well I knew
Thou wert as faithful and as true,
Whate'er thy lot.

One common joy, one common life,
We had apart from human strife;
I was thy trust, and thou didst lend
To me the charm of single friend,
A blessing rare.

Wilful sometimes, as mountain-hare,
The source to me of heartfelt care,

Would tempt thee to a vagrant chase;
Threatened, till back thou cam'st apace,
To be forgiven.

Since first we went among the heather,
'Tis fourteen years, and, there together,
Thou hast pursued thy silent thought,
And in my brain have fancies wrought,
Some marked, some lost.

But, gentle soul, I cannot say
That any gleam of fancy's ray
E'er touched me with the softening power
Thy love and faith, from hour to hour,
Aye had for me.

And now this eve thy grave is low,
And white beneath the Christmas snow;
The silent moon gleams calm o'er thee,
As it shall steal one night o'er me,
When laid as thou.

Thy simple faith, thy loving trust,
Thy kindling eye,—are these but dust?
Cast forth as weeds to rot in earth,
With nothing of immortal worth?
No! God is just!

Christmas Evening, 1876.

III.

OCTOBER IN THE SCOTTISH LOWLANDS.

The russet's o'er the heather,
The grace of the bracken gone;
Sere and dun each moorland space,
Where the gleam of summer shone.

The mist creeps o'er the height,
The burn comes hoarser down
The wandering wind is wailing
Among the bent "sae brown."

The blaeberry leaf, blood-red,
  Flushes the face of the brae,
As a crimson drop distilled
  From a deed in an olden fray.

The last golden sheaves of the haugh
  Are borne on the creaking wain;
Another year is upgathered,
  Ne'er to be mine again!

The varied days may pass,
  The varied times go by!
Let the spirit in me grow,
  Seasons may ceaseless fly!

On the sun-bright hues of summer
  May come a sober grey,
And the wreath on autumn's mellow crown
  Have the pathos of decay.

For the sunny hours I've known
No vain regrets I find,
If, passing, they but leave me
Fresh heart and a wider mind!

October 1878.

IV.

GLENHEURIE.

Glenheurie, or the Dark Glen, is the name of the deeply cleft and rocky valley which runs from near the top of Broadlaw north-eastwards in the direction of the Tweed. The burn in the glen joins the Herstane Burn about a mile above Herstane House. The line of the Glenheurie Burn affords the most picturesque ascent of the Broadlaw. It may be noted that Herstane takes its name from two standing-stones by the burn, and is probably derived from the Icelandic *hár* (masc.) *high*, and *steinn*, *stone*. In Welsh and Cornish *hir* or *her* means *long*, and we have *maenhir* or *long* (standing) *stone*. But the Icelandic derivation, as accounting for both parts of the word *Herstane*, is preferable.

In the heart of the hills,
Grand Glenheurie! Dark Glen,—
How fitly they named thee,
These old Cymric men,—
Thine was the forest gloom
Where the sun vainly shone;
Not a leafier shade
In thy wood, Caledon!

Now the forest shaw gone,
Storm-swept all the glen,
Only rowan and birk
Here and there ye may ken;
Not a copse for the lurking deer,
Not a shieling for man;
But a stern mountain-wall,
And, high as we scan,
The scant heather clings
To the screes in its fold,
And down in thy depths
Lies an awe as of old.

Down the vast mountain-cleft,
Deep, secret, and derne,—
From the sky-line afar,
In the misty heights born,
Foaming thy waters leap
From rock into linn;
But thine ear, Glenheurie,
Lists the voice in its din,
And dear to thy lone heart,
As the echoes rebound,
Is the Spirit that moves
In the wild rushing sound.

Grand Glenheurie! Dark Glen,
It is well to be here,
And to brood in thy wilds
With the spirit of Fear!
With thee dwells the lonely,
E'en the old forest grace,
The wild birds that haunt thee,
The last left of their race.

Falcon, eagle are gone,
Yet a raven's sole brood
Seeks a meet resting-place
In thy stern solitude.
Oh! ruthless the hand, bird,
And cursed be the sport,
That holds not for holy
Thy last place of resort!

High here in the wilds
One green Rowan abides,
All defiant of storm,
Fierce time and its tides:
Forest chieftain he is,
In his state and his glory,
Old as long centuries,
And grim as their story.

A chieftain forsaken,
Subjects, rivals, all gone:

Yet a true lord he rests,
With a grace of his own!
Great-boled and outspreading,
Limb-scarred in the strife,
Firm-nerved through the years
In the battle for life,—
Thy Rowan, Glenheurie,
Has the strength of the free,
Rock-throned at thy head,
As thy monarch should be!

Tree! the tales thou couldst tell
Of the years that are gone,—
The huntings, the night-raids,
When clear the moon shone.
Of Hawkshaw and Powmood,
Fruid and Stanhope, Cardon,
Drummelzier and Dawyck,
Each a stalwart baron,—
How they followed the deer

In the good olden day,
How fleet in the chase,
And how prompt in the fray!

Ay! Drummelzier and Dawyck
May have sat in thy bield,
Speaking sad words together
Of sad Flodden field.
How they saw the king's face
As he passed 'mid the stour,
Knowing not if he lived,
Or met death in that hour!
May have spoke of a youth
Brave and keen in the van,
Whose troth was to heal
The old feuds of the clan.
His still form by the Till,
As the gloamin' drew on,—
Gone the hope of his house,
Dead the heart he had won.

This old life now is past,—
Here thy Rowan abides,
E'en with whitest of bloom
Still greets the spring-tides;
As the bridal guests saw it
When they rode to Powmood,
And they spoke of young Bertha,
Sweet flower of the wood,—
Shows its berries deep-red,
As on that autumn day,
When, blood-red, the hands
Put the fair bride away.

Dark, haunted Glenheurie,
All my heart is with thee,
And the hoar face of eld
On thy brave Rowan-tree!

July 5, 1878.

V.

A PICTURE AT GLOAMIN'.

The solitary way I love,
When gloamin' darkens o'er,
And but my own footfall I hear,
'Mid shapes and shadows hoar,—

The dusty road, a long white line,
The fir-woods round me dim,
Through spaces of the moorland dun
One cottage sends a gleam.

The going burn grows grey and wan,
And pours a deeper sound,
And in the darkening air o'erhead
Are strange cries round and round.

When, lo! upshoots the eastern moon,
Silvers the birken tree,
Then streaks my path with gleam and shade,
'Mid the spreading moorland free.

October 1878.

VI.

THE VOICE OF THE DANISH BOY.

A TRADITION OF THE BORDER HILLS.

THE sun is passing behind the hill,
The eventide falls soft and still,
And down the glen from the western steep
The shadow moves in a dream-like sleep.
Peace there is for each farm and tower,
And the bliss and the rest of the gloamin' hour.

Around the vale on each wavy height
There streams the glow of a mellow light,
The farewell boon of the parting sun
To the hills that watch till his race is run.

But list! A strange deep-passioned tone
Is borne from the height that light shines on,
As of harp-strings touched with a gentle hand,
And the voice as of song of a foreign land.

Not loud or strained is the mingled note,
Only loving ear can hear it float;
It breaks not the calm of eve profound,
How gentle, yet deep, is that mountain sound!
Now it thrills in hope, then it falls in pain,
Rises and thrills and falls again,
As if passion had sunk to soft regret
O'er its fruitless day of strife with fate,
And empire held and the pride of power
Were a mournful dream of the evening hour.

From the hill there came a shepherd fair,—
"Had he heard the voice in the silent air?"
"Yes!" was his answer,—"I know it well;
Oft in the evening I hear it swell,

When the stillness comes in the summer night,
And the far hill-tops are aglow with light.
'Tis suddenly born, 'tis speedily dead;
As the gleam that glows on the mountain's head,
So suddenly comes and speedily goes
This strange weird song at the evening's close.
It dies with the light in a softening strain,
Till in the quiet eve it wakes again—
The plaint that follows the note of joy—
And I know 'tis the voice of 'the Danish Boy,'
Who sits a brief space on that green grave-mound,
Where say they his forebears' bones are found."

Sweet burst of regret for the olden time,
When hope was high and life in its prime,—
The theme is old, the strain ever young,
Nor heard alone in a foreign tongue.
From many a heart in this life of ours
There comes a like strain in the evening hours,—
A thrill from hope perished, and effort unblessed,
When our day is o'er, and our sun's in the west!

VII.

THE CLOUDBERRY.

Nay, touch it not; 'tis the cloudberry bloom,
My friend, you and I have found,
On this far height, 'mid the soft June winds,
Pale-white on the mossy ground.

Ah! rarely 'tis seen by the eye of man;
By us let it be not soiled:
The spirits linger long on the mists of the morn,
To watch it ope on the wild.

Up the hill we have climbed by dyke and burn,
The heather was breaking in green,
The blaeberry flower was red on the brae,—
Now we kneel to the Mountain Queen!

High 'neath the clouds thou bloomest alone,—
Last flower of the moorland free—
Thy homage the circling peewit's cry,
And the hum of the mountain-bee!

No blacker waste have the heights than thine,
White star of the mossy lea!
Face-turned to the dew and the light of morn,
Thou winnest thy purity!

Bloom fairer than thine I ne'er have seen
In dale or on hill I've climbed,
And ne'er have I known a darker birth
By the power of Heaven sublimed!

June 1879.

VIII.

ANDREW HISLOP—MARTYR.

About a mile to the north of the parish church in Eskdalemuir, and not far from the river, stands a solitary tombstone on the green hillside. It bears the following inscription: "Andrew Hislop, Martyr, shot dead upon this place by Sir James Johnston of Westerhall and John Graham of Claverhouse, May 12, 1685." Hislop was a young shepherd living with his mother near this spot. They had given shelter for the night to a fugitive Covenanter. The atrocity of the circumstances attending this murder is not overdrawn in the poem.

Andrew Hislop! shepherd lad,
"Martyr" graven on your tomb;
Here you met the brutal Clavers,
Here you bore his murderous doom—

Coming from the hill that morn,
Doing humble duty well;
Free in step, your honest look
Born of sunlight on the fell—

Here,—the Eskdale mountains round you,
In your ear the murmuring stream;
Here,—'tis May, the bleating lambs;
Life but seems a peaceful dream.

No weapon have you but the crook,
Your soft helpless flock to guide;
Here they shot you, shepherd lad,
Here you poured your warm heart-tide.

"Ere I pass into the Presence,
May I make a prayer to God?"
"Not one word," said brutal Clavers;
"Kneel to us, you rebel clod!

"Draw your bonnet o'er your eyes,
That is boon enough for thee."
"My God I meet with open face—
Whom you will hardly dare to see."

Westerhall and Claverhouse—
Turn now since the deed is done!
What care ye for rebel corpse?
Let it bleach beneath the sun.

So they left you, martyr brave,—
Left you on the reddened sod;
But no raven touched your face,—
On it lay the peace of God!

On the moor the widow-mother
Bows to lot of dule and pine,
And Westerhall and Claverhouse
Have merrily rode back to dine!

July 1880.

IX.

THE RETURN OF SPRING.

Oh! long beneath the wintry blast
Has cowered the Angel of Spring;
'Mid showers and sunshine at last
She has risen on timorous wing.

The birch she has gracefully tressed,
The larch tipped with delicate green,
The fresh hues of the spruce has set
The dark mantled firs between.

Low-sweet is her voice in the vale,
Where the water is singing free,
And the trout sun-circles are making
On the pool in their heart of glee.

The linnet a love-call it pipes
To its mate from a leafy bower;
And the bumble-bee is burrowing
'Mid its music in the flower.

The yellow violet peers on the hill,—
Eye of love for the spring's new green;
And each meadow-runnel is blessed
With the milk-eyed cardamine.

From the grave ariseth the soul
Of a new and trustful life,
In calm of faith,—as if ne'er despair
Had ruled 'mid the winter's strife.

Blessëd Angel of spring, to me
Thou'rt bringer of joy and tears,—
A bright-winged and dreamful thought,
To weaken my doubts and fears.

June 8, 1878.

X.

OCTOBER.

The glory is gone,
The purple, the sheen,
The deep heather-bloom,
The spaces of green.

The moorland is clad
In the buff and the brown,
The brackens dishevelled,
The bent bowing down.

Your brightness too brief,
  Ye moorlands and fells;
Fades the green that bedecks
  Your burn-heads and wells.

Soft the wind soughed
  In the glad summer time;
Pensive the hill-face,
  Now mourning its prime.

Pass all our best joys,
  Short-lived in their hour,
As the one splendid glimpse
  In a sweet summer shower.

October 1880.

XI.

A PASSING SCENE ON THE HILLS.

AUGUST 2, 1881.

THIS day
A gentle and a balmy south-west wind,
From ocean far, upbrings grey woven clouds
That softly veil the sun; their spreading skirts
Close o'er the sky-line of the circling hills.
Suddenly one vale, beneath the sombre heavens,
Is lit from haugh to height in radiance
From the unseen. The rude moor brightens with
A fervid joy, as of an angel's kiss
Impressed upon the brow of one that wakes
To rapture in a shimmering land of dreams,—
The home of happy fleeting phantasy.

XII.

In Memoriam.

JOHN BROWN, M.D.

The yellow violet on the hill
Came forth to-day in tenderest mien
A month before its earliest time,
And up my heart leapt full, I ween.

But sudden rose a saddening thought,
That quick repressed the impulse meet,
For I had learned, an hour before,
Thy noble heart had ceased to beat.

The violet comes from out the death
Of winter, when thy tender eyes,
That would have watched it with all love,
Are closed to every glad surprise.

Thou, Scotland's son by birth and blood,
The heir of all she loves, reveres;
Her pith of sense, her power of worth,
Her humour, pathos, pitying tears.

No borrowed strain, no trick of art—
The home-grown theme thine offering;
Ailie and Rab, Pet Marjory,
And Minchmuir with its haunted spring.

Thy life a fount of simple joys,
A sum of duties nobly done;
The meed of love, the memory dear
In human hearts for ever won.

Yet not unclouded was thy sky;
Some hours of doubt and dark were thine,
Ere brighter grew thy close of day,
The splendour of a sun's decline.

Thou truest friend, thou warmest heart,
Where art thou now? my spirit cries.
Within the veil I see thee stand,
And round thee are the pure and wise.

The brow, the face we loved on earth,
These, these are thine; what nobler guise?
The crown above thy silver locks,
And radiant o'er thy gentle eyes!

May 12, 1882.

XIII.

MY OWN FAMILIAR HILLS.

Your charm abideth ever,
My own familiar hills;
Let sun or storm enwrap you,
My heart with passion fills.

Though yours no Alpine grandeur
To thrill the sensuous eye,
A hand unseen, slow-working,
Through ages long gone by,

In wavy lines hath shaped you,
Far-spreading, silent, free ;
O'er an earth-ocean moveless
The eye goes ceaselessly.

Your uplands have a music
In the depths of summer calm ;
Your noonday voices fusing
In one low heavenward psalm.

O' night, your broad brows shimmer
In the white and weird moontide ;
In your glens far down and awesome
Dim haunting shapes abide.

Oft on the morn of winter
I've seen your grey crags stand,
White-crowned in snowy radiance,
The joy of all the land.

In June you gracious greet me,
With the rock-rose, meek and still ;
The yellow violet smiles to me,
And the fairy tormentil.

In August glows the heather,
And gleams the bracken green ;
The milk-wort lifts its gentle face,
The grassy tufts between.

October spreads its spaces,
High o'er the moorland free,
Of lint-white bent in ripples,
A breezy golden sea.

When o'er you clouds are rushing,
I'm borne on fancy's wing ;
Pass high in air old riders,
I list their bridles ring.

And then the heavens will open,—
The free fair face of noon;
Awhile I rest in blest dreamland,
As I hear the burn-heads croon.

Ye bright and gladsome burnies,
That leap and flash and gleam,
Where the bonnie birk is drooping,
And the rowan shades the stream,—

Ye make the rarest music,
The rocks are earless, grey;
In fulness of your own sweet heart
Aye singing by the way,—

The voice of one that heeds not
Our earthly sympathy;
Still hymning to the Love Unseen
A lyric true and free.

Ye solitary uplands,
Whom rarely foot hath trod,
Known but to one who loves you,
And the open eye of God,

In saddest mood ye've found me,
Thought dark as of the tomb,—
The sun-glints glancing o'er you
Have scattered all my gloom.

I've seen in skyey spaces
Looks not of earth or time,
And forms of shadowy mountains,
In another far-off clime.

And then the mist would wrap me
In many a mazy fold,—
The spectre shapes around me,
From the dim dreamland of old;

They rise, they flit before me,
In silent airy tread;
In the speeding forms and speechless,
I know historic dead.

A strange hushed life deep buried
Ye keep within your breast,
The stain of ancient story,
The spirit of unrest;

The grace of knightly presence,
The faith of lovers' vow;
A tenderness of hearts long quenched,
Ye bear the memory now.

In that still sheen of moonlight
I see their track, their tread:
Behind them in the valley
The seven brothers dead.

I see him stoop, drink faintly,
Beside the water wan;
The purple stain; the maiden,
She fears a dying man.

This old life gone for ever,
A void and airy dream;
The forms of all the legends,
But shadows on the stream!

No! not while heart can feel it,
Or bosom heave a sigh;
There is a living presence
For every living eye.

Ye give me thoughts all holy,
Ye knit me to the strong;
Ye nerve the will for duty,
And stir the heart to song.

Let fickle fame go by me,
Mean forms of earthly good,
If God my mountains leave me,
And my mountain solitude.

July 1882.

XIV.

"A hasty jest I once let fall—
As jests are wont to be, untrue—
As if the sum of joy to you
Were hunt and picnic, rout and ball."
—C. Kingsley.

TO ————.

It was a lightsome word I spoke,
Not knowing in a perfect way
The being of your inner heart,
The varying powers there holding sway.

I said you were on pleasure bent—
The dance, the theatre, and the pride
Of life, and pompous circumstance,
With gilded glory for your guide.

I knew you winced, and secret said :
"Is this the whole of life to me?"
Doubtless I touched but half the truth,
Yet half the truth may make one free!

When dallying with the lower self,
Perhaps 'tis well to have it said—
"This, this is you," for thenceforth springs
The thought that quickens heart and head ;

And makes us feel how very near
We are to edge of the abyss ;
How very near the glory waits,
Which only for a word we miss.

The swallow from a sunny clime
  Dips strange upon the darkened mere,
Then sudden rises high on wing
  Into the genial sunshine clear.

So you have touched the chilling wave,
  And found it not as once you thought;
Then sudden with a lofty flight
  Into a higher clime are brought.

Dear Friend! ne'er let your drooping wing
  Into the lower current fall,
But rise upon the glorious gleam—
  This is your Father-God's recall!

Christmas Eve, 1882.

XV.

THE CYMRIC TOWN.

The remains of the dwellings or hill-forts of the ancient Cymri are numerous on the hills of the Scottish Lowlands, especially in the central or more mountainous district, including the valleys of Eddlestone, Lyne, Manor, Tweed, Yarrow, Ettrick, and Teviot. They are chiefly to be found on the lower hills, of an elevation from 800 to 1600 feet or thereby. They consist generally of a rounded space or area, encircled by a ditch and mound. Sometimes they show more than one surrounding trench and embankment, either

partial or complete. The inner area usually contains remains that may be regarded as those of dwellings, probably wattled. Time and other agencies have done much to efface the original lineaments, but very good examples of what these fort-dwellings must have been at first still survive, especially in the valleys of Eddlestone and Manor. *Caer* was the original designation, and it is now frequently to be met with in names of places.

'Tis the place of the Cymric town,
On the high and airy hill;
The green o'er its ruined mounds,
Its once living voices still.

Shapeless the homes where they lived,
Shapless the cairns of their dead;
Sun-God! ye gleam as of yore,
But ye thrill not the mouldering head!

The bee hums low in the heather,
The old tune the waters keep;
But nerveless the eager ear,
Nought breaks on that dreamless sleep.

And fair lies the land they loved,
Around their old wattled home;
Hill and moor and boundless sky,
Far spread as the eye can roam.

Sweet music flows in each name
They gave to the wavy hill,
The haugh and the gleaming stream,
And the rushing mountain-rill.

Garlet, Garlavan, Caerdon,
Ye speak of their ancient time;
Penvenna, Trahenna, Traquair,
Ye fall with a mystic chime.

Theirs Talla, Manor, and Fruid,
Drummelzier foaming in speed;
And streams to be famous in story—
Yarrow, Teviot, and Tweed.

The height and the might of the hill,
The depth of the misty glen,
The roaring wind and the flood,
Were dear to the Cymric men.

And one great Power was in all—
The spirit of shade and gleam,
That made his peace with the eve,
And woke in the morning beam.

Now in forest gloom enwrapt,
Dim fear to the heart he brings;
Then sweet with the bird out-speaks,
In each note that joyous rings.

By the Caer are the ancient graves
On this high and airy height;
No lowlier tomb for the Cymri
Than the eagle sweeps in his flight.

Now meet falls the evening's peace;
A lone clear star is on high;
In ghostly line the white sheep pass
Up the hill 'neath the gloamin' sky.

XVI.

In Memoriam.

REV. JAMES RUSSELL, D.D., YARROW.

A MORN of mist and weeping rain,
As well befits our sorrow,
Hangs o'er thy vale, and o'er thy stream;
Thou grievest—rueful Yarrow!

The courtly grace, the kindly face,
Thou keepest not his marrow;
A quiet, self-sufficing life
He lived by thee, O Yarrow!

Of restless aim or fickle fame
No comfort would he borrow;
But he would live the people's friend,
And be thy lover, Yarrow!

By deed of blood, by hopeless love,
Thou every heart canst harrow;
Thy spirit in our gentle friend
Was purified, O Yarrow!

The strife of life he heeded not,
His joy to heal the sorrow
That fell upon each humble heart,
By thy clear wave, O Yarrow!

On every hill, in every glen,
To meet him was good morrow;
Now blithesome lark may o'er him trill
On thy dowie houms, O Yarrow!

I've seen thee oft at winter tide,
But ne'er so sad beforrow;
Ne'er fern so sere, nor bent so wan,
Nor birk so bare in Yarrow!

The pastor and the friend is gone;
Be his a brighter morrow
Than ever dawned upon thy vale,
Even thine! O winsome Yarrow!

January 12, 1883.

XVII.

THE SYCAMORE BEFORE MY WINDOW.

APRIL 7, 1883.

My sycamore! my precious tree!
I've watched you through the years arise,
A sapling growing free and fair,
And now full-formed in noble guise!

A favoured nursling of the soil,
Through sun and dew, and rain and storm,
'Mid powers conflicting you have reared,
By higher power, harmonious form.

Not turned aside by any gleam,
Through witchery of the wooing sun,
Not warped by tempest in its swing—
Your steadfast purpose kept and won.

This hour you stand before me bare,
In symmetry of bole and plan;
Hid at your root the spirit works,
As fresh as when the world began.

One common life you have in all,
In root and branch each other's good;
And every careless bough is twined
In sympathy of brotherhood.

Now with the eve the sun hath set
In golden bars your leafless frame,
And through the tracery of your boughs
The hill glows in cathedral flame.

An oriel 'gainst the southern sky,
A hundred scenes you give for one;
Each checkered pane hath its own heaven,
Yet severs not th' infinite throne.

When summer clothes you green in leaf,
'Tis then you have a merry tide,
Play with the kisses of the sun,
And feel a joy you cannot hide.

And as I curious gaze on space,
You nod to me and I to you,
And back you call my wandering thought
With a familiar touch and true.

The figure always 'gainst the void,
To me more than a human friend,
Why should I roam the world wide,
While you have grace and joy to lend?

Five riders for your tops you show,
And seldom rest they, foul or fair;
With helmets on, they jocund spur,
A merry lot, and high in air.

As with the wind they ride and ride,
I wonder what they would be at,
For on they go and back they swing,
And ne'er progress a single whit.

In air they beat against the sky;
On earth we strive a similar round.
Each finds the limit of his fate;
'Tis ours to know that we are bound!

XVIII.

THE HUNDLESHOPES.

Heights soothed and lapt in calm
This heaven's holy day; o'er your broad brows
The sky-dropt shadows pass one after one,
Self-woven in a dream that hovers o'er
Your silent face, and gently steals its way:
The Spirit pure that dwells with you, grave hills,
Well pleased to be, in such a sovereign hour
Of bliss, the partner of the love of heaven,
In deep abandonment to holy joy.
Let shadow darken, or let gleam illume,
Ye have no question, but are well content
To wait the opening of the mystery.

Sunday, July 29, 1883.

XIX.

A REMINISCENCE.

An eager boy, yet of despairful heart,
As with the bright noon I set forth to scale
The sky-concealing height, that rose beyond
The red burn-heads; methought I then should find
And know the mystery—the One who is
The fount of all; and thus I strove far up
The lonely glen, 'mid screes, and panting braes
Of green, still pressing on for Him above,
If haply I might find Him face to face,
In free communion: but I found Him not,—
Only the moor's silence, and th' infinitude
Around me, draped in clear-grey realms of sky,

Where *might* reign the nameless One whom men
call God;
Not here the vision, but the gleam that hints
And keeps the hope of Him in heart and soul.
And now that I have climbed well up life's height,
By Sense I find Him not, but in the Faith
Which, struggling, strives and holds, He beckoning
me
As by departing sign,—I with dim sight
Following lowly where His steps have been.

July 1883.

XX.

MY REPLY TO THE SHEPHERD.

"Why do you go where no man goes
Among the uplands wild?
Are you a man who's stern at heart,—
Your eyes, methinks, are mild?"

Thus to me spoke a shepherd grey,
With upturned wondering gaze;
And thus to him I made reply
About my wayward ways:—

"In inmost soul I'd be alone,
Beyond your farthest beat,
Beyond the valleys where the lambs
In June together bleat—

"Beyond the spring-fringed birks I'd pierce
To upland bleak and bare,
Where's but a tinge of green between
The heather dark and rare.

"There no man comes, and but the whaup,
With solitary voice,
Flies o'er my head with rapid wing,—
This, this is my heart's choice.

"But take it not I scorn my kind,
Or gentle things that dwell
By lowland haugh and lowland stream,
For I do love them well.

"Yet in my heart there is a void
Which all these may not fill;
They give no calm, no doubt resolve,
Nor hold the restless will.

"Th' unpeopled voiceless solitude,
Which compasses me round,
Is open vision of a sphere
I cannot mete with bound.

"Out to the great immensity
I pierce with restless gaze,
And Sense and Thought sink overcome,
With heart in weird amaze.

"Here closer to the mystery,
Nearer the Living Throne,—
The same to-day and yesterday,
While we pass one by one.

"And thus I ponder all that is
In that strange word *before*,
And how th' infinite tide will flow
When I shall be no more.

"No peace, I ween, hath any soul,
Until it knows the mood
Of awe cast from the Eternal Power
In the heart of solitude.

"If this be not a fit reply,
No more than any child
Can I tell you the reason why
I seek the upland wild."

July 1883.

XXI.

SMAYLHOLM TOWER.

Deep-rooted on thy rock, 'mid knowes and crags
Untouched by hand of man, as rude and wild
As when the sun first saw them green and grey,
And lit their straggling sombre whins with gold,—
Thou risest strong, a massive square-knit keep,
And sett'st on high thy watchful bartizan
O'er all the Border land,—of old, as now,
Its grim and solitary sentinel.

From thee keen warder watched, and eyed the moon
Rise slowly gleaming o'er the eastern sea,
While Tweed's responsive stream its reaches bared,

And through the haugh-land spread its silver links,
As in the shadows lay white-spotted kine.

Westwards the fronting Eildons caught the sheen,
And rose far north the lonely Lammermoors
In misty haze; one after one the peaks
Of Cheviot glimmered on his ken, and showed
The long far line that barred the Southron's sky.

Grey-grim thou art! storm relic of the years,—
And through thy narrow boles the wind uplifts
Its melancholy voice, a wail for all
That thou hast known, and all that thou hast been.
The wasted bent is round thee, and bows low
Its tresses on the eerie Watchfold Crag
That knew the flame whereby the Lady saw
That dead knight's umbered face, limned as in life,
And yearned with love as to an earthly form,—
Not witting he lay in a bloody tomb.

Grey-grim and weird! and thy wan lochan keeps

Thee fit companionship; not one dark tale
Doth it reveal, but moveth restless aye,
As if 'twere stirred with memories of deeds
It holds within its depths, done ere dawn had come
To touch the darkness or the face of man.

Befits thee well this February morn,
As over all the hills within thy ken
The grey wide-spreading sky soft lays a calm;
Yet sends glints sudden earthwards through the clouds,
That in brief shimmer pass, one after one,
O'er the bared bosoms of the Cheviot heights;
As if the Spirit of the Past were here,
With loving care for old historic spots,
And fain would glorify the vanished dead,
With that pathetic peace from heaven that broods
O'er heroes' graves and ancient battle-fields.

February 16, 1884.

XXII.

In Memoriam.

WILLIAM BURNETT OF BARNS.

DIED MARCH 5, 1884.

THE representative of the ancient Tweeddale family of Burnett of Barns, who held the estate for more than six hundred years, from the twelfth century to 1838.

'Tis gloamin' tide, and 'mid the parting clouds
The moon makes tender light, and shoots soft beams
Upon the blue-grey sky that lies along
The south-east hills, tear-laden; in the west
A radiant splendour ling'ringly abides,

Where late the sun hath been; the long, low hills
Against the west and north are shadowed dark
On that sad eastern slope where they enclose
A dead friend's silent face, nought witting now
Of splendour, shadow, or encircling care,
Or passing murmur of his ancient Tweed
Beneath the chamber, where he shrouded lies.
Ah! moon, and tearful sky, and lingering light,
Are ye e'en aught for us, or for our dead?
Or are ye but the passing callous shows
That know no difference in our mortal fate,
Mating our grief with gleam, our joy with shade?
I cannot tell, but this I know somehow
That in my heart ye make this gloamin' more
Than the mere gaze of sense, as ye o'erlook
And canopy the form of one who lies
Amid his old ancestral hills, and all
The memories of a long-descended line,—
Forebears that stood with early Scottish kings,
That knew the Bruce, and bled at Bannockburn,
Saw Flodden, Pinkie, and the Douglas day,

And eager eyed Tweed's beckoning cresset-fires.
Grand old forebears, where now are ye? A heap
Of shapeless dust, unfeeling, eyeless, mute!
Or know ye aught of him that lies this hour
In death? Perchance there may be faces now
Upturned to these high stars, this open heaven,
Amid strange stirrings in the moonlit glens,
Weird passings to and fro of shadowed forms,—
Where oft o' nights his strong forefathers rode,
And where, in this sad hour, hearts once of earth
Are beating in undying sympathy;
And fain would gather him, one spirit more,
Within the welcome of their kinship home,
Where, buried all the strife of times long gone,
Unknown the pettiness of modern life,
There reigns serene immortal brotherhood.

XXIII.

IN THE RHYMER'S GLEN.

MAY 8, 1884.

Come now, O Queen of Faery,
Come now and touch my hand;
Dawn thou, O gentle vision,
From the Elfin spirit-land:

Come at this hour a-Maying,
When the breeze is in the sky;
The joyous clouds are speeding,
The lark soars trilling high.

Come now, O Queen of Faery,
With the first love-steps of spring;
The larch holds out its tassels,
The birks free splendour fling.

Thy Rhymer's glen is yearning,
Methinks thou tarriest long,
While breeze and bird and burnie
Sing one expectant song.

Come now, O Queen of Faery,
In this the young spring-tide;
Thy glen is decked and joyous,
All eager for its bride,—

The bride of long-gone ages,
In the days of glamoury;
As vanished star whose glory
Still haunts the memory.

Pray as I may, O Vision,
Stretch hand in craving fain,
And gaze with yearning eye,
Thou comest not again!

The spring returns as ever
With voice of wood and stream;
The sun on pool is blinking,
And casts its olden gleam!

Well mayst thou hold us faithless,
And scorn the heart of men,
As the Rhymer's kiss none gracious,—
Thou comest not again!

Thou seest us kneel to Mammon,
And the god Utility;
Thou, in the unhewn temple,
Thou Nature-spirit free.

How poor this earth without thee,
Bedeck it as we may!
Oh give me back the vision
That blessed the olden day!

XXIV.

ST MARY'S LOCH.

FROM RODONO, EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 5, 1884.

THOU canst not stay, dear Loch, unmoved beneath
This moon, the full-orbed eager eye that glows
Above thy southern hills, and holds thee bound
By passionate face of olden memories;
Under the beam thou racest from the east,
In long-drawn ripples, bright from shore to shore;
Thy deep full heart leaps up in joyous mood,
Free-bound in moving links of silver sheen,
The eager unconstraint of new-born love.
O'er thee thy guardian hills bend gleaming, fused,
Faint-dimmed, in the transparent veil, where now

In middle air the olden visions float,—
The love-lorn maiden of the Forest Kirk,
Her face whose tears bedewed the Dowie Den,
The lovers fleeing o'er the moonlit bent,
The widow wailing sore her loved slain lord,—
The dead that know not death,—assembled there
Serene and still, as is the pearly cloud
Of this night's heaven, whose calm encircles thee,
Thou gentle, conquering moon!

XXV.

ON FIRST HEARING THE NOTE OF THE CUCKOO THIS SPRING.

MAY 6, 1885.

NEW heart and hope! Why should ye rise from this,—
The simple note I heard a year ago,
From that same spot,—the centre of my world,—
The group of trees that guard the living spring,—
The Well-Bush, clasped in hollow of the hill?
Note after note, thy welcome comes to me,
First from the year's long silence, speaking hope
And joy, the seër of a happier time,
The trusting prophet of a brighter day,—

While wintry showers are striving with the sun.
A voice thou art from the invisible Power
That girds this earth and all our human life,
God-sent, God-sped; yet thou, strange visitant,
Dost know not all the purpose of thy call,
The living thrill thou bearest to the heart,—
Thou angel-minister of the Unseen,—
Fraught with His hidden thought, His quickening
touch
Of love and ever-living sympathy.

XXVI.

ON THE GLENRATH HEIGHTS.

AUGUST 25, 1885.

HIGH where the great Heights enfold me,
'Tis here where I love most to be,
When the mist o'er the tops is speeding,
And the heart speeds on with it free.

Where the bent waves over the heather,
And the bracken is green on the brae,
And the burnie is leaping and pouring
Its song of young life by the way.

Looking in awe but to heaven,
Here would I dwell and alone,
Let it clothe itself in the grey cloud,
Claim the sun-smit height for its own.

Passing now with its face of darkness,
Changing then to its sunny smile,
The patient hills never murmuring,
Be it gloom or glory the while.

Hills ! ye have stood through the ages,—
What do all your changes mean,
But flickerings forth on the daylight
From the Power enthroned and unseen ?

Are ye waiting a fuller out-speaking,
Ye Hills with your silent face ?
Calm on your brows may I see not
The look of expectant grace !

Come thus, O Spirit, upon me,
I know not all that thou art,
But thy footprints of love and of beauty
Are the solace and joy of my heart.

Thou hast clasped the screes in the heather,
The purple bloom spread to the day,
On blaeberry leaf dropt the blood-stain,—
With Thee my heart burns by the way.

XXVII.

In Memoriam.

JOHN CAMPBELL SHAIRP.

DIED AT ORMSARY, IN THE EARLY MORN OF FRIDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 1885.

Oh! soul to soul, and heart to heart,
A brother true, in every part,
The light of many a life on earth,
Deep quickening as a second birth!
And thou art gone! my lovëd friend,
No longer hand to hand we wend;
From my poor life a light is gone,—
The shadow where the clear eyes shone:

I cannot pierce that foreign strand,
But where thou art, no sunless land.

Ne'er truer man or purer heart,
'Twas thine to live "the better part,"
A soul untouched by worldly mood,
Unerring in its rectitude,—
A spirit fair from Heaven sent,
To what was noble, thou wert bent!

The simple things of mother earth,
The wayside flower, the moorland birth,
The heather spaces, high and free,
"The bent sae brown," the bracken lee,
The grey rock where the burnie breaks,
The linn-pool where the rowan makes
A shadow o'er the water's face,
The braeside with its birken grace—
These were thy joys, O gentle mind,
And these I've shared with thee, my friend.

Yet not alone the simple sight,—
Through these, through all, a higher light
For thee aye burned, pure as a flame
That from a hidden glory came—
Shone gleaming from a Power on high,
Beyond the mountain, star, and sky,—
His was the sunlight, His the storm,
His mountain mist, and shadowy form,
His the bright beam, the darkening mood,
The pathos, awe, and solitude;
Clearest upon the mountain brow
Thou saw'st the Power, God-visioned thou!

Thy presence gone, thy work remains,
We bless thee, grateful for our gains,
For pathos, beauty, graceful art;
Free nature's ways, the human heart
So touched that as the ages flow,
And higher soul shall in man grow,
The simpler vision, purer time,
Will cherish dear thy moving rhyme,

In Kilmahoe's creations fair,
And "The Bush," aye green, "abune Traquair."

Oxford! thy courts and halls he knew,
A son deep loving, faithful, true;
From thy past drew inspiring breath,
And fitly wore thy laurel wreath,
Thy learning prized, each storied name
Was power to set his heart aflame;
Yet truest to old Scotland's days,
Best loved old Scotland's ballad lays,—
In him full beat, without control,
The Scottish heart, the patriot soul.

Where breaks the blue Atlantic wave,
And sunny ripples Ormsàry lave,
Where grew thy youth in ardent time,
Where rose the visions of thy prime,
Where Highland lore and Higland love
Were constant aye thy heart to move,—

There in the early autumn morn,
Thou passed to the unearthly bourne;
The open stars were looking on,
Expectant of the coming dawn,
And they and thou, lost to our sight,
Were folded in one heavenly light.

XXVIII.

ON CADEMUIR.

OCTOBER 18, 1885.

THE Autumn peace hath fallen
On these encircling hills,
And all the air is silent,
Save where the Manor fills
Its pools in links enfolding
Dear Cademuir's sacred rest,—
The sky-gleam from the hill-top
Sheds a blessing on its breast.

The peace of gracious dying,
The calm of graceful dead,

Where lay the heather glory,
And sheen of bracken spread:
There now the bloom decaying,
There now the deepening brown,
And dark the heather spaces,
And dimmed the mountain crown.

Yet the bent hath greater glory,
Most peaceful, now the year
Is flowerless and dwining,
And leaves are wan and sere,—
Well like a noble woman
On whom, as years may flow,
A finer grace there cometh,
Than e'en in youth's full glow.

Ye bear you well, grey mountains,
Unmoved amid decay,
The past ye hold in patience,
For the future brighter day.

Let such a peace spread o'er me
In my last passing hour,—
Let such a calm enwrap me,
O'ershadowed by the Power;
Resigned to God, yet waiting
The spring-birth, new and free,
Like mountain soul, faith-hearted
In meek expectancy.

XXIX.

IN YARROW.

JANUARY 2, 1886.

I'LL see Newhall this winter day;
The withered hills to me are dear;
The lint-white bent, the bracken brown,—
Ye well beseem the faded year.

And restful all the heights around,
Their greenery spent, the summer gone,
Now waiting in a blissful calm,
With quiet faith, the April sun.

Nor without omen now of hope,—
The sky-blue rift, the sunny gleam,
The soft wind bearing light and shade,
The leaping voices of the stream.

I muse and pass by lone Glenlude,
There Yarrow spreads before my sight,—
The grey clouds moving part and throw
O'er the brown hills a dappled light.

No gliding stream art thou, this morn,
Thy flood each branching channel fills;
In gleaming spears adown the vale
Thou pour'st three Yarrows from the hills:

In roaring sweep of Border fray,
Thou risest in this year new-born;
Untouched by age, untamed by time,—
In strength as of thy earliest morn.

Now flow with all thy torrent force
Bring pulsing of thy mighty heart,
Then softly voice the mournful strain,
Heard when fate-stricken lovers part.

Whate'er the years to come may hold,
Of love or power or tragic deed,
Well canst thou match the wondrous tale,—
Let maiden sigh or warrior bleed.

Beseems thee well the gentle tide
That flows in summer's gloamin' time;
Befits thee well the forceful mood
'Neath this grey sky and winter clime.

Thou'st known the craving heart of love,
The hapless fate of dule and sorrow,
The yearning for the south wind's breath
To waft a kiss to her on Yarrow.

Thou'st known the manly form outstretched,
Face upwards on the benty heath,—
No braver man than he laid low,
Nor stronger arm now limp in death.

Thou hast so framed our souls to these,
Well mayst thou leap and flash to-day;
No grander man, no nobler maid
Shall live than in thy Ballad lay.

XXX.

In Memoriam.

LAURA.

BORN OCTOBER 28, 1862; MARRIED MAY 21, 1885;
DIED APRIL 24, AND LAID IN TRAQUAIR
CHURCHYARD, APRIL 28, 1886.

WHAT—where—art thou this Sabbath morn,
The first since thou wert laid in earth?
We silent look upon thy grave,
And wonder 'mid the Spring's new birth.

The greening boughs droop over thee,
The silver daisy stars the grass,
Sweet bird-notes on the air are borne,
The sun-gleams o'er the hillsides pass.

And thou laid low! not knowing aught—
Fresh joy of earth, sun-glint that cheers;
And never more thy heaven-touched eyes
Will shine on spring-tide through their tears.

The ardent soul, now quenched in death,
'Mid promise of the breathing Spring;
The heart, God-stirred, that moveth not,
Once throbbing to each gentle thing.

The hand one ne'er shall touch again,
The eyes whose gleam we'll never see,
The voice whose sound was sweetest charm—
The past that never more shall be!

The welcome smile, the parting grace,
The witching air, dear Laura, thine,
Thou'st shed them from thy early grave,
And left for memory to entwine

In one love-cherished wreath for aye
Round thy fair brow and sunny hair;
Thou creature of a God-like clime
That breathed on earth diviner air.

Ah! shall the present e'er for us
Have such a spell as memory gives?
'Mid all the brightest we may see
Thine image is the power that lives.

She sleepeth well, green-graved Traquair!
With thee, her dear-loved hills around;
Thy storied stream this morn soft makes
Amid its stones low moaning sound,—

Not for the first time murmuring o'er
The sorrow of our life's mischance,
But passing ne'er with sadder heart
In all the days of old Romance.

Not e'en the lover's broken hope;
Not e'en when Lucy left The Glen;
Not e'en when in the weird grey night,
The heart-blood stained the water wan.

In vain for thee we longing yearn,
We cannot see thee—cannot know;
And dawns will flush and evenings pass,
And seasons come and seasons go;

And birks grow green around the burn,
The heather purple o'er the brae;
But our dear one will ne'er return,
Our Forest Flower is "wede away"!

What—where—art thou this Sabbath morn?
I know there is a hopeless creed—
But yet we trust, O God, that Thou
Hast healing for our hearts that bleed.

A shape, men say, as wavering dream,
That moves on some far-distant shore,
Towards which we turn with outstretched hands,
But reach, ah! reach thee, never more.

Not such my faith, not such thy fate—
A Heart has yearned for thee above;
And thou hast gone where angels are,
Thy spirit to a boundless love.

From the sense-world upon thy sight
Shone faces, God-like, through the veil;
Thy brow now radiant with the truth,
A-gleam with light that ne'er shall pale.

We, seeing part, have ready plaint—
"Thou strik'st, O God, with awful hand;
Thy wisdom we may not foresee,
Thy power our fate can not withstand."

"Why mock us with a heavenly dawn?
Why quench it in its opening ray?
Why rob us of the promised wealth,
The untold brightening of the day?"

Nay, rather thus, thou gentle one,
We think of thee as summoned home;
One longing look to friends on earth,
The world's fond yearning overcome.

He beckoned from within the veil,
On Him thou bent thy saintly eyes,
Then turned the way which He had trod—
Thy Hope, the Living Sacrifice.

May 2, 1886.

XXXI.

THE TWEED.

FROM SUMMER MORN TO EVE, MAY 9, 1886.

COME bright in the morn's beam,
Come joyous and free,
Brave son of the moorland,
My heart speeds with thee.

Through gleaming pool stately,
Then rushing in stream,
Ye pass lightly changing,
As moods in a dream.

Green alders, birk tresses,
  Fleck thy waves as they glide;
The cloud-gleams are borne on
  Thy pure lapsing tide.

Meet spirit for worship,
  Sky-born and earth-given,
Thou minglest earth's shades with
  The hues of the heaven.

Thine the joy of the morning,
  Thine gleam of bright day;
Till grey-coming gloamin'
  Greets thee on thy way,

And spreads her veil o'er thee,
  Withdrawn from our eyes,—
And we hear thy voice moving
  In soft fall and rise.

While earth's sounds are hushed all
In the mild even's calm,
And the stars and I listen
Thy heaven-borne psalm.

XXXII.

In Memoriam.

LORD DALKEITH.

WRITTEN IN YARROW, SEPTEMBER 21, 1886.

SWIFT down the steep slope his eager heart bore him;
Sharp clang of his rifle,—dread fate in its roar,—
The hills' mournful rebound,—the youth death-stricken,—
He quivers and falls to rise never more:

Ere deed of glory could brighten his story,—
Young, chivalrous, manly, gallant, and true;
If no fame, yet no stain, on a life brief and noble,
When echoed the knell of the hope of Buccleuch.

Not the first of thy race outstretched on the moor-
land,
When the birks of the Forest drooped o'er him
forlorn,
And the bent bore the stain of the blood-stricken
foray,—
The dead face upturned to the light of the morn.

Oft tragic and dread was the fate of thy fathers,
But o'er them hearts bled not in cot and in shiel,
As they bleed for thee, youth, sleeping so lonely,
On that grim, gory cliff by the shore of Lochiel.

None but a stranger to tend thy last moments—
The heir of broad hills, spreading fair in the sun;
A draught from the spring by kind hand thee
proffered,—
Breathing thanks, a chivalrous knight, for the
boon.

The grey hours must pass, and dawn streak the morning,
Ere Achnacarry can shelter thy head;
But he, in whose heart thou liv'dst in thy lifetime,
Will lonely this night watch the face of the dead.

The raven will croak on Farrachmore riven,
The eagle swoop down from his eyrie on high;
But nought shall come near thee in that pallid slumber,
As cherished in death, as in life, thou dost lie.

By stormy Lochiel this day ye are mourning;
There is dule in the halls of high Achnacarry;
But adown Ettrickdale there's a sorer wail,
And deep is the dirge on the braes of Yarrow.

Esk, Liddel, and Teviot mingle their sorrow
O'er the bier of the youth, both gallant and true,
And the Forest winds bear it where'er grows the heather,
The sad moan for the fate of the hope of Buccleuch.

XXXIII.

IN MANOR.

AN AFTERNOON PICTURE, SEPTEMBER 11, 1887.

Its deepest song the Manor sings,
  This day of mist and grey-cloud rain,
And in its rising swell and fall
  I hear again the sad refrain,

That meets me on an autumn day,
  Has touched my ear in youthful morn,
When first by thee, loved stream, I strayed,—
  A sorrowing voice, yet not forlorn.

Corn-fields are bare, and on the hills
The heather fades, the bent is white,
The bracken yellow 'mid the green;
Yet through the rain a golden light

'Mid clouds and towers in heaven is tossed,
Strays on the hills, strikes mists beneath,
That rise and pass against the sky,
Blown by the mountain-spirit's breath.

'Tis a strange land 'mid those weird hills,
Where cloud and gleam are trailing high;
What glances there? one daring bird,
Hath pierced the tumult of the sky!

XXXIV.

IN MANOR.

JANUARY 28, 1888.

BACK once again in thee, dear Vale,
Where first to life my fancies rose;
And now 'twould seem all else is dream,
Save what from thee in secret flows,

And links itself in cunning play
Of thoughts that shape the inner soul,
Ne'er voiced in words, in deeds ne'er shown,
And owning but their own control.

Again I'm on the current borne,
  My outward life has no recall,
Out-blotted as it ne'er had been :
  And thou, dear Vale, art all in all.

With thee the past, with thee the real,
  A past of feelings, fancies, tears,
Life's deeds and words here fade and pale,
  Thou dreamland of my living years !

Yet not e'en Spring has touched thy brow,
  Nor prankt thee with a smiling flower,
Clear, piercing air on vale and hill,—
  The breathing of the wintry hour.

But in the sky a glowing sun
  Touches with gleam hill-face and stream,
As it had waked in summer time,
  And walks as in a joyous dream.

It circles all thy lowly glen,
In glory of its own bright sphere,
Shoots golden shimmer on thy moors,
And triumphs o'er the wintry year.

To the high heaven one's heart upsoars,
In yearning to the God-like face,
And thou and I, dear Vale, are won
To worship in a blessëd grace.

What, thee before, the hour of fame?
Pomp, power, and tattle, all they bring?
What but the flickering gleams that pass
On flutterings of a restless wing?

The memories of the higher self,
All that the grave can never claim,—
All that th' immortal cares to keep,—
This thou alone for me canst name.

Thus do I yearn to thee, dear Vale,
So live I as the life in thee,—
Hours, days, and years are gone—are nought,—
In thee I find Eternity!

XXXV.

THE ECLIPSE OF THE MOON,

SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 28, 1888—AS SEEN AT THE LOANING.

She rose and passed on high,
Clear, beautiful, transcendent, as a queen
Might go attired for bridal, without peer,—
The wonder of the world, serene in joy;
Not witting aught of dark oncoming fate,—
Of shadow that should clasp her in eclipse,—
A pall of death: in trial still a queen,
Ne'er losing mien, touching the cloudy veil
To grey transparency, then radiant glow,

In lofty triumph o'er her darkest hour.
At length, in splendour clearer for the shade,
She looked, and all the peering stars grew pale,
Then passed undoubted to her empire-throne!

XXXVI.

THE SEVEN SPEARS OF WEDDERBURN.

The seven sons of Sir David Home of Wedderburn who fell at Flodden, were known as "The Seven Spears of Wedderburn." The incident of the ballad is historically true. The name of the knight, so foully entreated by the Borderers, was Sieur Antoine d'Arces de la Bastie, and the date of his slaughter was September 1517 — exactly four years after Flodden. De la Bastie was slain in revenge for the execution by Albany of Lord Home and his brother.

The Seven Spears of Wedderburn,
High stalwart lads are they;
And in the sun and 'neath the moon
Ride foremost to the fray.

In many a Border foray,
O'er many a heather hill,
The spears have glanced, one after one,
From Blackadder to Till.

And when the sun was westering
On Flodden's crested height,
The Seven Spears of Wedderburn
Gave first shock in the fight!

The minions now of Albany
Are preying on the land,
The Laird of Home is done to death,
And D'Arcy hath command

In all the Merse and Lothians,
Where only Home should reign:
That Frenchman on his fleetest steed
Shall ne'er win back again.

So hot and fast gay D'Arcy rides,
Behind him hot rides he,
The youngest Spear of Wedderburn,
Fierce o'er the benty lea.

Now but one leap to clear the hag,
And the foremost horse has won,
Or the gallant with the comely face
Looks no more on the sun.

One fatal plunge, and D'Arcy
Is helpless in the moss:
Now stay thee Jesu Saviour,
With the comfort of the cross!

For a ruthless hand is on thee,
Like a tiger in its ire;
And vengeance in the Borderer
Burns with a lurid fire.

And now he turns and homeward rides,
But from his saddle-bow
There dangles by its yellow locks
A knightly face and brow,—

So loved of dames and damosels
In the gay Court of France,
Now strung in gleeful triumph
'Neath the savage Border lance.

And many a mourning maiden
Has shed the bitter tear
For D'Arcy's fate, the gallant knight,
And Beauty's chevalier.

What shall be said of thee, young Home,
And of thy deadly turn?
What shall wipe out the bloody stain
On the Spear of Wedderburn?

August 1883.

XXXVII.

A LEGEND OF NEIDPATH CASTLE.

What foundation there may be for this traditional tale, it is difficult to say. Nor, supposing it to have some ground in fact, can it now be ascertained whether the incident occurred in the time of the Tweeddale or the March family—Hay or Douglas — who successively occupied Neidpath Castle.

Massive and grand the Tower by the Tweed,
Where the woods o'erhanging see
The rippling gleam of the joyous stream,
As it sweeps to the ocean free.

Its flowerëd terraces are fair,
As their lines encircling run,
By the ancient yews and leafy limes
Before the westering sun.

My lord, he scans the varied vale,
As he paces the bartizan high;
Why darkens his brow in the sunlight fair,
And with passion glares his eye?

A grimy face there against a stone,
A pillared stone he had reared;
A beggar's form in dismal rags,
It leaned and looked and peered!

"I brook not," said the noble Earl,
"The sight of unseemly thing"—
He fumed and swore—"That caitiff there
To the dungeon you must bring."

"I thought to get a better alms,
Could I see your lordship's face;
Beseemeth well a noble man
To bear the poor some grace."

In dungeon lay the unseemly man,
Hoary and bent with years;
The poor old soul,—his heart beat hard
On his bed of stone and tears!

On the morrow they're joyous off to town,
The Earl, his lady, and train;
The lamps are lit, the dance is set,
The hours speed on amain.

Three days had gone, and life was high,
The pulses throbbing keen;
But on my lady's sleep that night
Broke a ghastly pictured scene—

Rose on her view the dungeon space,
Dark, dismal its strong girth,
No glimpse was there of heaven's light,
No breath of the fresh'ning earth!

There huddled lay on that rocky floor
A shape as of the dead—
A piteous face with a pleading look,
As it had craved for bread!

"Ah! good my lord, send with post-haste
To save this dreadful stain;
I'd give all Neidpath's acres broad,
If that my dream were vain."

Swift the horseman rode that morn;
But pale was his look, I trow,
When he saw the face on the rocky floor,
And wot the dream was true—

There he lay the unseemly man,
A huddled form and dead;
And fingers gnawed!—ah! woe is me—
In the Castle by the Tweed!

XXXVIII.

THE LAIRD OF SCHELYNLAW.

This ballad has arisen in my mind from some queer, quaint memory of an old tradition. How I got it, I cannot now in the least remember, nor am I at all sure that it has any foundation in fact; but I rather think it is founded on some sort of belief of foul play on the part of the head of the House of Traquair, with a view to get back to the main branch of the family the lands of Schelynlaw. If so, the incident must have taken place in the time of the first Earl,—in whose character scrupulousness was not a marked feature, though I should be loath

to charge him as accessory to murder. This deed may be left to the indiscretion of Jock of Grieston, who came of a violent stock.

These lands were clearly an original portion of the estate acquired by the Earl of Buchan from Rogers, their temporary possessor; for we find that in 1492 a claim was made on the Earl by Geilis of Cokburne, daughter of William, third of Henderland, and Alexander Murray her husband, for ten merks' worth of "the land" of Schelynlaw. They alleged that they had obtained seisin from William Murray of Traquair, deceased. This William Murray, or William de Moravia—possibly the Outlaw—had been forfeited in 1464, and his widow Margaret Murray also claimed twelve merks yearly out of the estate of Traquair. She got eight merks from the Earl of Buchan, the new laird. But the estate of Schelynlaw came eventually to be separated from Traquair, and to be held by a kinsman and his successors. In 1585, Schelynlaw is in possession of James Stewart, captain of the King's Life

Guard, and youngest brother of Sir John Stewart of Traquair. This James Stewart was served heir to his brother Sir William in 1605, and died in 1606. He was succeeded in Schelynlaw by his second son, Sir Robert Stewart, who was tutor to his nephew John (grandson of James Stewart), afterwards Sir John Stewart and first Earl of Traquair. Sir Robert Stewart of Schelynlaw was dead before December 12, 1633, as his son, James Stewart of Nether Horsburgh, was on that date served heir to his father in parts of Horsburgh, Kailzie, and Ormistoun, but not in Schelynlaw. There was no independent family of Stewart of Schelynlaw after this date. Sir Robert was probably the person referred to in the tradition on which this ballad is founded. The Tower of Schelynlaw stood on the slope of the hill, about a quarter of a mile up the valley on the east side of the Schelynlaw Burn, which joins the Kirkhouse Burn nearly opposite the Manse of Traquair. Its remains are now green mounds marked by a solitary tree. Myddlemast

was the name of the family of Grieston; they held the property from 1476, with some slight interval, until 1624, when the lands passed or were sold to the first Earl of Traquair,—who died suddenly, March 29, 1659.

Schelynlaw Tower is fair on the brae,
  Its muirs are green and wide,
And Schelynlaw's ewes are the brawest ewes
  In a' the country-side.

The birk grows there and the rowan red,
  And the burnie brattles down,
And there are nae sic knowes as Schelynlaw's,
  With the heather and bent sae brown.

But wife, three bairns are a' frae him gane,
  Twa sons in a deidly raid;
And but yestreen his bonnie lass Jean
  In Traquair kirkyard was laid.

A lane auld man in his ain auld Keep,
What ane could wish him ill?
Not e'en Traquair wi' his black fause heart,
And his loons that range the hill

Out in the morn to the muirland dun,
Rode ane frae Schelynlaw's gate,
Into the mist of the hill he rode,
His errand might not wait.

The opening arms of the grey hill haur
Folded the rider dim;
Oh, cloud of the muir! 'tis a gruesome deed,
Ye hide in your misty rim.

Up he made for the Black Syke Rig,
And round by the Fingland Glen,
But he turned and turned him aye in the mist;
Its glower was as faces of men!

And oft a voice sounded low in his ear,
"The sun is no' gaun to daw—
For that straik o' blude and that clot o' blude,
On the breist o' auld Schelynlaw!"

'Twas late o' nicht—to the House of Traquair,
A horseman came jaded and rude,
None asked him whence or why he came,
Nor whose on his hands was the blude.

"But hae ye the Bond?" said hard Traquair.
"The Bond i' faith I hae,—
The deid sign nae mair, the lands are thine,—
But foul was the stroke I gae:

"I've ridden wi' you ower moss and fell,
In moonlight and in mirk,
And monie a stalwart man I've hewn,—
So shrive me, Haly Kirk!

"Lewinshope Tam and Wulrus Will
I slew, and Jock o' the Ha';
But there's my richt hand to burn in flame,
Could I bring back auld Schelynlaw!"

Schelynlaw's lands were ne'er bought or sold,
Yet they fell to the house of Traquair;
But Jock o' Grieston that rode that morn
Was ne'er seen to ride ony mair.

High in state rose the noble Earl,
Well did he please the King;
He could tell any lie to the States or the Kirk,—
His warrant the signet-ring.

Many a year has come and gone,—
His pride and his power are away,
A graceless son has the old lord's lands,
And the father's hairs are grey.

The Court is back to Edinburgh town,
Lairds and braw leddies ride there;
A dole some give to a bowed down-man,
In pity,—'tis auld Traquair!

XXXIX.

THE DOW GLEN.

IN THE HENDERLAND BURN.

THE scene of the supposed retreat of the wife of Cokburne of Henderland during his execution. The tradition that a Cokburne of Henderland was summarily hanged over the gateway of his own tower is old and persistent. What is certain is that the laird who so suffered was not William Cokburne, who was tried and executed in Edinburgh, 16th May 1530, though he is probably the person whose fate is bewailed in the exquisite lyric, *The Border*

Widow's Lament. This William of Henderland was fifth in descent from Perys de Cokburne and his wife Marjory — in all likelihood of the family of De Soulis — whose tomb of the early part of the fifteenth century is still preserved on the site of the old chapel on the knowe by the burn. Perys de Cokburne, the first of the Henderland line, was the third son of Sir Alexander Cokburne of that Ilk and Mariota de Veteri-Ponte, a daughter of one of the most illustrious of the Norman houses. The Cokburnes of Henderland were a very powerful branch of the older family. They owned, besides Henderland, Sunderland, and Bold, part of Kirkurd, Dalgliesh on the Tima, and other lands. Margaret Cokburne, daughter of the second Perys Cokburne of Henderland, married Sir Walter Scott of Kirkurd, and her son, Sir David Scott, virtually made the fortunes of the family of Buccleuch. Margaret Cokburne, the sister of William who was executed, married James Veitch of Dawyck, and there was thus probably, besides the wailing by

the widow on the Meggat, a sad mourning for the brother beyond the hills by the Tweed. (For the genealogy of the Cokburnes, see 'The House of Cockburn,' by Mr Cockburn Hood.)

Soft downwards glides the burnie
Into its deep dark Linn;
The rude grey rocks encircling,
Listen the quiet din.

Two rowans twine their branches,
Where the streamlet fills its urn;
And gleam and shade are flecking
The waters as they turn.

On this fair morn of summer,
When the green is on the hill,
And every glen keeps silence
For the music of its rill;

No marvel, Linn, old-storied,
Thou sharest the heart spread-wide,
In sunny sheen arraying
Thy gentle lapsing tide.

As if thou'dst known no sorrow,
Ne'er heard a woman's wail,
And only note of gladness
Been wafted down thy vale.

Yet once no deeper outburst
Heard the ages in their course,
Nor passion thrown to heaven,
In fiercer torrent force;

As from the wife, heart-broken,
Thy waters bore the cry,
And the forest hills in echo
Woke the world's sympathy.

Ah me! She hears the shouting,
  Where she cowers beside the Linn;
Around her lord men crowding,
  And all the dying din.

A stroke of death, none feller
  Hath ever flashed from cloud;
In joy of life at morning,
  At eve low in his blood.

And none now knows her story,
  Where human heart doth dwell,
But weeps the woman watching
  The dead she loved so well;

But weeps the widow "happing"
  Alone the form clay-cold,
In tender consecration,
  To the keeping of the mold.

Linn! in mine ear thy cadence
Hath its own peculiar fall;
As echo of a sorrow,
Through Time which softens all.

And thy bright lapse, short-gleaming,
Of a life the symbol meet,
Whose joy all sudden closes
As in dark pool at thy feet.

Clings to thy rock the ivy,
To keep faith's memory green;
And the red rose of the brier
Glows where her love hath been,—

A love that is undying,
As thou, Linn, goest ever on,
In rise and fall aye soughing
In sorrow's monotone!

July 17, 1887.

XL.

TAMMAS TRAILSTICKS, THE DOCTOR'S MAN.

A SCOTTISH INCIDENT OF EIGHTY YEARS AGO.

Tammas Trailsticks, the doctor's man,
Scanned, rev'rent, the doctor's e'e,
Saw something was workin' within,
Took thocht o' what it micht be!

John Thamson had dee'd that morn,
Baffled a' the doctor's skill;
Tammas thocht i' the richts o' science
He should come i' the doctor's will!

Tammas, off 'neath the cloud o' nicht,
Is up in the auld kirkyaird;
"There are plenty o' deid i' their grawfs,
Ane can be weel eneuch spared."

Sair pickin' and howkin' that nicht,—
An auld man howkin' the deid,—
And just as doon he got to the corpse,
The mune shone red like a gleed!

But Tammas kent naething o' fricht,
And soon i' the doctor's hay-loft,
Lay streekit in a' its deid-claes,
What was deep i' the kirkyaird croft.

Auld Tammas, in grey of the morn,
Speeled up the hay-loft stair,
Just to see that a' was quiet;
But, my faith, what a sicht he saw there!

John Thamson, stern, sittin' upricht,
Wan face-glower through the deid-claes;
"The deevil!" said Tammas, "what's this?
Will ye fleg us a' in sic ways?

"Ye were yirded, I'm sure eneuch,
We gaed trampin' ahint the hearse,
And noo, guid sauf us, ye're here!
Are ye earth's, or heaven's, or worse?

"I' the land o' the leevin' ye dee'd,
And noo when ye ought to be deid,
Ye wunna rest like a decent corpse,—
For this is there nae remeid?

"Odd! if folk will leeve, let them leeve,
If folk will dee, let them dee;
But to be baith leevin' and deid,
Sets the coorse o' things clean agee!"

And what happened just after that,
Is mair than ane daur say,
But John Thamson cam' i' the doctor's will,
In the coorse of that very day!

When Tammas himsel' was laid doon
I' the trouble he ne'er gat ower,
Low mutterings cam' aye through his sleep,
Weird words o' a deid man's glower!

"I canna thole that mune i' the grawf,
Aye glowering red like a gleed,—
Tak' away that wersh-lookin' face
Wi' thae deid-claes roond its heid!

"I canna thole that fearsome sicht
I' that gousty auld hay-loft;
Wad to God I had left him to lie,
Laigh doon i' the kirkyaird croft."

XLI.

TO REDCAP.

Redcap! you're queer and you're gruesome;
Out o' night at my window-pane;
Iron toes and fingers, aye scrappling
Up and down there with might and main.

Three toes, three fingers of irön,
Ne'er cast in an earthly mould;
Weird grey eyes gleaming and glowering,
With the light of the days of old.

Your cap of the purple heather,
Your coat of the thistle's dark green,
Knee to ankle bare as the moor-bent,
Neither shoes nor hosen, I ween.

And here you have come from the moorland,
From the heights where the winds are free,
Where you spurl 'mid slidders and heather,
Known but to the moor-bird and thee!

Sombre Glenrath and green Manor,
Blackhouse, Hundleshope, and Caerdon;
Stanhope, Glensax, and the Meldons,
Ye know them full well every one.

I've heard you there whirr with the moor-cock,
And startle the mountain-hare,
Shriek to the whaup and the peesweep,—
Then grin with glee at the scare!

Down by the burn, 'mid the shadows,
I've heard wail follow on wail
Till you had befooled the unwary,
Then laughed o'er your idle tale.

Oft when the summer is dwining,
And the wind with the bent plays free,
There, 'mid the lint-white tresses,
You are flitting in wanton glee.

Dearest to you is the gloamin',
With its skirt of the weather gleam
Outspread on the wavy hill-tops,—
High there you bob, and beseem

That clear grey line 'neath the darkness,
Where you revel and sport and play,
And beckon aye with an eerlish grin
To the tomb of the buried day.

A frolic sprite and a restless,—
Yet oft in that weird grey eye
A tear will suddenly glisten,
When the gleam's in the April sky.

And e'en in your speeding gambols
I've seen you quick pause and turn,
With a glance for the new-born primrose,
In the cleft of the mountain burn.

Errant sprite! some memories olden,
Sweeter thoughts not fraught with pain,
Awake with the gleam of the opening flower,
Broken notes of a finer strain.

But aye when the night is the darkest,
And the wind strives fierce with the rain,
Ye shriek and pipe and whistle
Loudest call at my window-pane.

And you and I there together
Rare converse hold of the past,
And sounds unearthly and eerie,
They pass high and low on the blast.

And you and I talk and whisper,
The world knows not what we say;
But this deep midnight communion
Is worth all of the garish day.

Oft you tell of the mighty Baron,
The wizard lord of Hermitage;
By your spell life-charmed 'gainst arrow,
Lance, and sword of a foeman's rage.

Then low in the vault so darksome,
In that oaken chest iron-bound,
You lay,—Lord Soulis beside you,—
Eager listening aye for the sound.

When the rusty lid flies open,
Oh! let him not look on your face,
As breathless he bends his ear to ken
The fate that lies all in your grace!

Oh! sad was that lord when impatient,
Rough and rude he knocked on the chest,
And you rose a sprite stern and wrathful,
That would list no more his behest!

To the Ninestane Rig they've borne him,
Lead-enwrapt by the Ninestane burn,
And there in the red glowing cauldron
He hath gotten a deadly turn.

"But why not stand by your master,
O Redcap! both eerie and sly?
Oh! how was your spell worth the courting,
When it failed in the hour he should die?"

"High above aught of our doing,
Above all the powers of Time,
Strong Destiny holds its ongoing,
Metes our fates from its throne sublime!

"Not e'en I might his doom stay more,
I, Redcap, both eerie and sly;
For the man of blood and the tyrant
Must pass in his hour and die."

O sprite now out in the darkness,
I trow ye have spoken well!
Thy teachings are far-borne echoes
From moorland and misty fell.

Lessons all down olden story,
Deep writ on the Border hills,
Of right and mercy abiding,
Whatever the tyrant wills.

O sprite now out in the darkness,
The strong chest has mouldered away!
By a living tomb unfettered,
On the free Border hills you stray.

I see you bob high on the sky-line;
Then bound with the mountain burn,
But mostly you haunt in the darkness,
Hail the grey cloud of night's return.

But let the eve be the darkest,
And the wind strive fierce with the rain,
Come and shriek and pipe and whistle
Loudest call at my window-pane.

My ear is to you ever open,
Spirit quaint of the olden day:
Come, decked with the cap of the heather,—
To my heart this the richest array!

LAST WORDS.

Dawn-splendours, morns that glow alone,
Where the red sun glimmers on the rain,
And the mist is caught in heaven high,
And the burn's a-gleam in the breathing glen.

The moons which wander o'er the hills,
The wasted moons which no man sees;
The burn-heads where the waters sing
To earless rocks, lone rowan trees.

For these who cares in this poor time?
What profit bring they, stock enhance?
How help one to the social mark,
Or set him in the worldling's chance?

Why then this waste, why all this wealth,
Free-cast abroad from God-like hand?
For thee not, self-sufficing thing,
Not thee, mean mortal, understand!

But a poor grasp is thine—no more!
The pageant it will ever pass,
Whether you blink or gaze aright,
Or grovel with the beasts at grass!

'Tis the Divine, self-flowing One,—
The God-like,—he must effloresce!
So will the suns glow, and the moons
Gleam o'er your perished paltriness!

THE END.

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